

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, Senator Jeffords, and distinguished members of the Committee. It is both a privilege and honor to come before you as President Bush's nominee to be the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Environmental Information and Chief Information Officer for the United States Environmental Protection Agency. I have environmental program and information technology experience and also a passion for ensuring environmental decisions and policy are based on defensible data.

I come from a strong and supportive family. I am proud to introduce my mother, Pam O'Neill, and my aunts and uncles, Chuck and Kate Wall and Carey and Amelia Kriz, who are here supporting me today. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of my family as well as my friends and colleagues for their continuing support.

All of my professional experience is rooted in supporting environmental protection. I began my career collecting environmental samples, visited dozens of industrial facilities and reviewed countless analytical results. I spent eight years working with state environmental department leaders to improve their business by redesigning their business processes and incorporating technology without compromising the integrity and outcome of the programs. Over the past four years, I served as the State Director of the National Environmental Information Exchange Network. I know my reputation on developing the partnerships in the States, collaborating with EPA, and working with new technologies on this project is one of the reasons I am before you today.

In my testimony today, I would like to share my thoughts on managing information at the federal and environmental levels. The Federal government comprises more than 100 agencies and thousands of sub agencies and programs. The complexity of relationships with other levels of government as well as the private, non-profit, and university sectors is daunting and system communication barriers continue to exist.

Given these complexities, the challenge is how we use information technology to better serve the government and the American citizen. The President's Management Agenda, through the advancement of the Federal Enterprise Architecture, is the blueprint for how agencies can share data better in the future. I believe that CIOs at all levels of government must align investments to create system interoperability required to provide the American public with government services, especially in a crisis. The prospect of Federal government providing leadership on interoperability is one of the most profound actions it can pursue in this decade. It will also take strong leadership and a willingness to share and adopt best practices, tools, and systems between Agencies.

With respect to environmental data management, I am fortunate that EPA has built a strong foundation with three major programs, namely Environmental Indicators, the National Environmental Information Exchange Network, and Enterprise Architecture.

The Assistant Administrator for the Office of Environmental Information has the responsibility to ensure environmental data is sharable and accessible, quality is not compromised, systems are secure from today's threats, and data can be turned into meaningful information. The foundation has been set and great strides have been made. That said, for EPA to be more responsive to the American public's questions on the environment, progress needs to continue in all of the programs I mentioned.

If confirmed, I will focus on improving data quality and access to environmental information. It is my vision that scientists will make decisions based on historical and real time data. And, government agencies will have access to environmental data in daily processes as well as in times of national emergencies.

I grew up part of a military family. My late father, Lt. Col. Vincent O'Neill, was a first generation Irish American who graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and served proudly for more than 20 years as an Officer in the United States Marine Corps. He was a highly decorated war hero serving two tours on the ground in combat in Vietnam. When I became an adult, he shared his belief with me that every citizen should perform some type of service to his or her country – whether it is military, government, or public. Giving back makes this country great. Even though I have worked in the private sector for most of my career, I believe in my father's philosophy.

I am now ready, enthusiastic and committed to this opportunity to serve. I am confident that I can utilize my experience and leadership skills to advance the Agency in meeting the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead. If confirmed, I intend to support the President's e-Government agenda, and I will support Administrator Johnson in accelerating the pace of environmental protection while maintaining our nation's economic competitiveness. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee, Members of Congress, and Administrator Johnson to improve the environment and to be responsive to information needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to take any questions.